

Dear Members of Labor and Public Employees Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Richard Perez and I live in Hartford, Connecticut. I support Senate Bill No. 1178: *An Act Expanding Connecticut Paid Sick Days*.

I am a disabled person who began getting sick at the age of 35. At that age, I had been working for a small family-owned plumbing business that had a staff of seven. My employer also happened to be my landlord in the north end of Hartford.

Thanks to the governor for wanting to expand paid sick time and I think it's important that we expand paid sick days to everyone regardless of employer size. When I needed it the most, I would have been left out.

At the time of the initial illness, I did not speak, read, or write English. As such, I was unable to get my plumbing license. The owner of the company and my landlord would pay me 16 dollars an hour for a job that would normally cost 25-50 dollars an hour. I worked anywhere from 8-12 hours a day. Sometimes we would get adequate notice, sometimes not. Sometimes we learned the day of. This made it nearly impossible to have a life outside of work. The inconsistency in my schedule made it so that my life revolved around work, leaving me little time for other things.

More importantly, he made great money and we did not. He charged people so much for the services that customers would cry when I would hand them the bill, and yet I was struggling to pay him \$750.00 in rent.

To add insult to injury, we weren't offered paid sick days, paid family medical leave, predictable schedules, predictable pay, or fair wages. Most of the people who worked for him were people of color or older white men who could no longer work for themselves because of their age. It was easy to get away with all of this because it was hard for us to get jobs elsewhere. We all knew it was unfair but lacked the access to do anything about it.

Ten years into my employment and tenant relationship, I started experiencing epileptic attacks. The first series of attacks left me in the hospital for a month. I was the main bread earner in our household of 4. This set us back and added stress to our family. My family was left to figure out how they were going to make ends meet for an entire month without any income coming in.

I would periodically fall ill after that and once again the cycle of "How will things be paid?" began.

Even when I ended up in the hospital due to workplace safety issues, I was not approved for workers comp, paid sick days, paid family medical leave, etc. Eventually, after 27 years of working without any ability to save money, I left with a list of medical issues.

Recently, I found myself hurt after working for a company that had excellent benefits. This company paid for everything. I wish I had access to this when I was raising two daughters in Hartford. It would have made all the difference.

I urge the Connecticut Legislature to ensure that my daughters and the children they raise have access to paid sick days with 80 hours of use, a definition of family that is found in the Connecticut Paid Family Leave Act gets rid of the waiting periods for use, allows you to accumulate paid sick time faster, and covers all workers regardless of employer size.

I strongly support the expansion of paid sick days in our state. I hope the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote favorably this year to strengthen Connecticut's paid sick leave law in accordance to what S.B. 1178 outlined.

Thank you for your time,  
Richard Perez Hartford, CT